

Cronin's Key Guide: Australian Rainforest Plants

by Leonard Cronin

Publisher: Allen & Unwin. 2009, 181 pages. ISBN 9781741751130. RRP \$35.00

This is Cronin's sixth in a series of natural history books and features more than 300 common rainforest species of Australia. Cronin writes: 'This book is designed as a simple, easy-to-use field guide and an introduction to some of the major and most commonly admired rainforest flora.' It is a wonderful little book that leads the reader along the road to awareness and appreciation of the great diversity of Australia's rainforest plants.

The book begins with a brief introduction that describes rainforest characteristics and identifies the broad rainforest types before concluding with a section that details how to use the guide.

Plants are arranged according to type, i.e. Trees, Palms, Pandans, Cycads, Banana, Tree Ferns, Ferns, Vines and Wildflowers. Within

each plant type, species are presented within their families, two to a page. Family, species name and size head each species contribution. A common name in larger font is provided below this header followed by a description of the plant, detail of its bark (where appropriate), leaves, flowers and fruits or cones for gymnosperms and sporangia for ferns. The information for each plant finishes with a brief account of its habitat. Information provided for each species is informative, useful and sufficiently detailed for confident identification. A distribution map and colour illustration also is provided for each species. The colour illustrations are accurate and sufficiently detailed to further provide the reader with confidence in their identification, and the illustrators are to be commended.

The text avoids cumbersome scientific language but some terminology is unavoidable; however, a small but sufficient glossary is provided and includes a pictorial glossary of leaf shapes, flower parts, flower arrangements and leaf arrangements. These are invaluable. The index is useful and provides both scientific and common names.

The book is particularly ideal for the traveler interested in identifying some of Australia's rainforest plants. It is conveniently sized, well presented, written and illustrated, and is well worth its cost of \$35.00.

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